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C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 001775

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/22/2011  
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SUBJECT: WESTERN SAHARA: CORCAS HEAD TO BRING NOTHING NEW  
TO WASHINGTON

REF: RABAT 1087

Classified By: DCM Wayne Bush. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: CORCAS Chairman Kalihenna Ould Er Rachid told Ambassador he would travel to Washington September 23, for meetings beginning September 25. He planned to focus on explaining Moroccan efforts and progress toward pulling together an autonomy plan for the Sahara. Ambassador repeatedly urged that Morocco needed to come up with a concrete credible plan, or risk losing MINURSO. Kalihenna had nothing new to offer on an autonomy plan. He said it would take a few more months, probably until the end of the year, to produce a draft. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Kalihenna Ould Er Rachid, Chairman of the Royal Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS) called on Ambassador Riley September 22. Kalihenna said he would depart the next day for Washington, for a week of meetings beginning September 25. He said the objective of his visit was to brief U.S. officials on the GOM and specifically CORCAS efforts to pull together an autonomy plan for the Western Sahara. The GOM has been holding its consultations with Sahrawis. He said Morocco and the Sahrawis want direct assistance of the USG in resolving the Sahara problem, in or out of the UNSC.<sup>8</sup> USG support was needed urgently, also due to the arrival in Sahara of Al-Qaeda elements from Algeria. (Comment: This is not new information.)

¶3. (C) Kalihenna said drafting an autonomy plan had been problematic, given its potential to affect all of Morocco. He pleaded for patience on the part of the U.S., because producing a plan that would protect Morocco, while giving the Sahrawis their due rights, had proved exceedingly difficult. This will take some months, he said, probably until the end of the year, but not years.

¶3. (C) Ambassador stressed that we had made clear to the GOM that if Morocco could put forward a concrete and credible plan, the USG would support it. Several months was too long, however. Morocco should take advantage of this unique, time-sensitive offer. It would be difficult for the USG to support MINURSO mandate renewal next month if such a plan were not on the table.

¶4. (C) Kalihenna was accompanied by his Secretary-General, Maelaane Ould er Rachid, who will also be going to Washington. Ten other members of the Council will also make the trip. Meetings had been arranged at STATE and the White House. The program was in flux, however, due to difficulty obtaining meetings with Congress. Ambassador urged him to be realistic about meetings on the Hill, which could be difficult to schedule, as Congress was trying to finish its business before pre-election recess.

15. (C) Background note: Khalienna Ould Er Rachid is the head of the 144-member Royal Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS).

The king formed CORCAS on March 27, 2006 to be a consultative group responsible for drafting an autonomy plan for the Western Sahara. The members of CORCAS were drawn from the Western Saharan tribes, nongovernmental organizations, academic and professionals. Khalienna, from a major Sahrawi tribe, is the elected mayor of Laayoune, the largest city in the territory.

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